

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2859

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BERLIN UNN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY KABUL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 1550

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, EAIR, WB, GE, GW

SUBJECT: GDR AIRPLANE PERFORMS MERCY FLIGHT FOR WEST BERLINERS

1. SUMMARY: GDR AIRLINE INTERFLUG FLEW SPECIAL MERCY FLIGHT KABUL-BERLIN JULY 16 TRANSPORTING ONE DEAD AND NINE INJURED WEST BERLINERS TO SCHOENEFELD WHERE THEY WERE PICKED UP AND RETURNED TO WEST BERLIN BY AMBULANCE. FLIGHT, WHICH WAS AT REQUEST OF WEST GERMAN EMERGENCY FLIGHT ORGANIZATION, HAS BEEN PUBLICIZED IN BOTH EAST AND WEST BERLIN MEDIA. ALLIES WISH, HOWEVER, TO QUESTION SENAT AS TO WHY AN ALLIED CARRIER WAS NOT USED SINCE ALLIES AND SENAT HAVE HAD SEVERAL DISUCSSIONS ON RESCUE FLIGHTS IN PAST MONTHS, AND ALLIES HAVE PROVIDED SENAT WITH LIST OF ALLIED FLAG CARRIERS EQUIPPED TO HANDLE MERCY FLIGHTS. WE CAN IMAGINE THAT THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOME SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MADE INTERFLUG BEST CHOICE IN THIS CASE. WE AGREE WITH ALLIES, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT SENAT SHOULD PERHAPS BE BIT MORE ZEALOUS IN

GETTING WORD TO WEST GERMAN ORGANIZATION ABOUT
AVAILABILITY OF ALLIED OPTIONS LEST GDR SCORE
POLITICAL COUP OF APPEARING TO BE MORE RELIABLE
THAN ALLIES IN SENSITIVE AIR TRANSPORT EMERGENCIES.
END SUMMARY.

2. INCIDENT BEGAN WITH BUS ACCIDENT IN AFGHANISTAN
INVOLVING WEST BERLIN TOUR. FRG EMBASSY IN KABUL
CONTACTED WEST GERMAN MERCY FLIGHT ORGANIZATION,
DEUTSCHE RETTUNGSFLUWACHT (DRF) IN STUTTGART, WHICH
WAS UNABLE TO DISPATCH ONE OF ITS OWN PLANES TO PICK
UP DEAD AND INJURED. DRF APPARENTLY SOUGHT AT FIRST
TO ARRANGE FLIGHT WITH SWISS LINE SPECIALIZING IN SUCH
MISSIONS BUT NO PLANE WAS IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE.
DRF THEN TURNED TO INTERFLUG WHICH AGREED TO HAVING
A TRANSPORT PLANE, TU-134, DO ROUNDTRIP FOR DM
80,000. INTERFLUG PLANE INITIALLY FLEW TO STUTTGART
(NOT VIA CORRIDOR) TO PICK UP MOBILE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
THEN WENT TO KABUL JULY 16 WHERE IT PICKED UP CRASH
VICTIMS AND RETURNED THEM TO GDR'S SCHOENEFELD AIRPORT
SAME EVENING. RED CROSS AMBULANCE FROM WEST BERLIN
MET FLIGHT AT SCHOENEFELD AND EFFECTED TRANSPORT BACK
TO WEST BERLIN.

3. COMMENT: IN ADDITION TO FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL PLAY
IN WESTERN PRESS, STORY WAS REPORTED ON GDR NEWS
BROADCASTS WHICH EMPHASIZED HUMANITARIAN SERVICE
PROVIDED BY GDR TO WEST BERLINERS. ALLIED COLLEAGUES
HAVE SUGGESTED TO US THAT USE OF INTERFLUG IN THIS
INSTANCE IS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING SINCE SENAT HAD
EARLIER IN YEAR REQUESTED ALLIES TO ADDRESS PROBLEM
OF MERCY FLIGHTS CITING IMPORTANCE OF HAVING ASSURED
SERVICE FROM ALLIED FLAG CARRIER. SENAT NOTED THAT
DRF COULD NOT ITSELF FLY TO BERLIN AND THAT SWISS
PLANES WHICH WERE THAT AGENCY'S NORMAL SECOND CHOICE
COULD LIKEWISE NOT FLY DIRECTLY TO WEST BERLIN AIRPORTS.
SENAT EXPRESSED TWO CONCERNS, THAT NEED FOR OFFLOADING
IN FRG AND SWITCH TO ALLIED FLAG CARRIER COULD PRESENT
MEDICAL PROBLEMS OR THAT USE OF INTERFLUG WOULD OFFER
GDR OPPORTUNITY FOR POLITICAL EXPLOITATION. ALLIES
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ACCORDINGLY MET SEVERAL TIMES WITH SENAT IN SPRING
TO REVIEW VARIOUS OPTIONS THAT WOULD BE AVAILABLE
TO DRF. WE POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC
TO EXPECT THAT DRF COULD EVER ITSELF OBTAIN GDR
OVERFLIGHT RIGHTS TO ENTER BERLIN CONTROL ZONE BUT
THAT SCHEDULED ALLIED CARRIERS ALL HAD MEDICAL
EVACUATION CAPABILITY IF SUFFICIENT LEAD TIME WAS
PROVIDED. WE ALSO OUTLINED POSSIBILITIES AND

LIMITATIONS OF USE OF ALLIED MILITARY CRAFT. BRITISH PROVIDED SENAT WITH INFORMATION ON SPECIAL BRITISH MERCY FLIGHT ORGANIZATION BASED IN UK WHICH WOULD BE WILLING TO SERVICE BERLIN ON SHROT NOTICE.

4. WE HAVE HEARD THAT INTERFLUG'S QUOTED PRICE FOR AFGHANISTAN FLIGHT WAS BARGAIN BASEMENT. FURTHER REASON DRF CHOSE TO USE GDR AIRLINE THIS TIME MAY ALSO BE THAT IT WISHED TO AVOID ANY POSSIBLE SOVIET OR OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN DIFFICULTIES WITH OVERFLIGHT PERMISSION FOR DIRECT INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT TO BERLIN. RATHER UNIQUE NATURE OF AFGHANISTAN INCIDENT, INCLUDING SCOPE, GEOGRAPHY AND COSTS, SUGGEST TO US, THEREFORE, THAT IT MAY BE DISTINGUISHABLE FROM RELATIVELY ROUTINE MERCY FLIGHTS INVOLVING RANSPORT OF BERLINERS BACK FROM HOLIDAY RESORTS IN WEST OR TRANSFERS BETWEEN BERLIN AND OTHER WESTERN HOSPITALS. WE HAVE ACCORDINGLY INFORMED OTHER ALLIES THAT WE WOULD AGREE TO ASKING SENAT WHETHER DRF HAS BEEN FULLY FRIEFED ON VARIOUS ALLIED OPTIONS AND WHETHER THOSE OPTIONS WERE IN FACT CONSIDERED FOR AFGHANISTAN FLIGHT. WE HAVE INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE WE WOULD OF COURSE FAVOR SENAT EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT DRF IS FULLY AWARE OF SERVICES ALLIED CARRIERS CAN PROVIDE SO THAT USE OF INTERFLUG AND SHOENEFELD IS KEPT TO MINIMUM, WE WOULD NOT WISH TO APPEAR TO BE CRITICIZING MANNER IN WHICH THIS MEDICAL EVACUATION WAS HANDLED. GEORGE

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